



Honourable J.V. Bainimarama, CF(Mil), OSt.J, MSD, jssc, psc

Prime Minister of Fiji and Minister for iTaukei Affairs and Sugar Industry

SPEECH AT THE COMMISSIONING OF MALAKE WATER PROJECT

Malake Island
RA

Thurs. 23 April, 2015
1200 Hours

The Minister for Infrastructure and Transport;

The Chief Executive Officer, Water Authority of Fiji;

Distinguished Guests;

My Fellow Fijians.

Bula vinaka and a very good afternoon to you all.

I'm delighted to be here on the island of Malake with the islanders and other people of Ra to commission the project that finally links you all with the mainland water supply.

I read a story in the *Fiji Sun* back in December in which one of your residents, Matelita Nauga, said it had been her childhood prayer that the island have proper access

to water so that the children weren't totally reliant on drinking rain or underground water. Well, now Matelita's prayer and the prayers of all of you have been answered.

And I couldn't be more happy as your Prime Minister that the Government has been able to do so. To provide you with a precious resource that is part of my Government's programme to give ordinary Fijians the things they need and the things that previous Governments should have delivered long ago.

At a total cost of around **650,000 dollars**, we have now brought treated water from the mainland to the 135 households on Malake.

It has been a big undertaking – laying the pipes from the Viti Levu mainland across the open channel to the island. The work started last August and it took about seven months before it was completed on March the 27th this year.

The project was divided into five phases:

- * In phase one, a pipe 300-metres long was laid from the trunk water main on Viti Levu to the edge of the mangrove area.
- * In phase two, an underwater pipe was laid across the open channel, a distance of 1.5 kilometres.
- * Phase three involved laying a pipe of 1.8 kilometres on the Island itself.
- * And in phase four, a twenty thousand-litre tank was constructed on the island to serve as a reservoir for the supply.
- * In the final phase, water meters were connected for the 135 households and the taps could finally be turned on.

What a wonderful difference this is making to all of you – the ability, for the first time, to have access to fresh, clean water flowing right from the mainland into your homes on the island.

The days of relying on underground water are over. The days of relying on rainwater are over. And I know from what you are telling me that it is transforming your lives and the collective life of the whole community.

No longer are the people of Malake hostage to the long, dry spells that sometimes created acute water shortages on the island. You all know how tough those times were. And especially during those peak periods like Christmas when people needed water to cook for the festive season.

It is a tremendous advance for all of you and the future of Malake, which is now more secure because your access to water is guaranteed.

I want to thank everyone involved for bringing this project to completion - the Water Authority of Fiji and the workers engaged on the project. I'm delighted to learn that of the 25 workers involved, fifteen were engaged from Malake Village. And it is their hard work -

along with the rest of the construction team and divers - that we celebrate today.

As always with projects of this kind, there were elements of risk but it's a tribute to the entire team that we had no accidents and no negative environmental impact during the construction phase. Vinaka vakalevu to you all.

My fellow Fijians,

This project underlines my Government's commitment to deliver the services you need in more isolated places such as Malake and give you the same benefits enjoyed by other Fijians in more populated parts of the country.

Whether it is access to free education, better health services, electricity, telecommunications or clean water – as in this instance – my Government's determination is to deliver and to serve. And we do so equally determined that every Fijian should have the same opportunity as anyone else, no matter who they are or where they come from.

I want to say something very important to you all: Decide for yourselves the truth of what is being said when the Opposition tells you that the iTaukei are being disadvantaged in the new Fiji.

Look at the evidence and make up your own minds. Because I don't want you to just accept it when I say that you are much better off under my Government than you have ever been in the past. I want each of you to decide for yourself based on what you see all around you.

I'm not interested in telling lies, making false promises or scaring you about threats that don't exist. I'm getting on with the job of serving you better. Of my Government serving you better. Paying your children's school fees, putting on the water supply where none existed before and making sure that your children and grandchildren have better opportunities and better lives than any Fijian has ever enjoyed before.

The truth is we Fijians have never been stronger. Fiji as one nation has never been stronger. Our economy is

growing strongly and there are great days ahead. God has blessed us and we pray that God will continue to bless us as we work as one nation, one people to make Fiji even greater. To gain even more respect in the world than we enjoy today.

My fellow Fijians,

Today is a great day for you all. The day the mainland water supply came to Malake. The day my Government officially turned on the taps.

I want to thank you all for the wonderful welcome you have given me and especially the traditional ceremonies of welcome, that make every Fijian proud of our unique traditions and culture. And I thank you all for the opportunity to be here with you today and to meet as many of you as I can.

Vinaka vakalevu, thank you.
